

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-2, 4, 8-10, 12, 16-17 and 19 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1-2, 4, 8-10 and 17 are amended; Claim 19 is newly added; and Claims 3, 5-7, 11, 13-15 and 18 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer by the present amendment. Support for the amended claims can be found in the original specification, claims and drawings.<sup>1</sup> Further, Claims 1-2, 4, 8-10 and 17 are amended to correct cosmetic matters of form, and new Claim 19 recites features similar to Claim 9, but is drafted to avoid interpretation under 35 U.S.C. § 112, sixth paragraph. No new matter is presented.

In the Office Action, Claim 17 was objected to because of a minor informality; Claims 9-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101; Claims 1-3, 9-11 and 17-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Kobayashi et al. (U.S. Pat. 6,275,825, herein Kobayashi); and Claims 4-8 and 12-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Kobayashi in view of Nakayama et al. (U.S. Pub. 2006/0190588, herein Nakayama).

Claim 17 was objected to because of a minor informality in the preamble of the claim. In response, the preamble of Claim 17 is amended to correct this minor informality. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the objection to Claim 17 be withdrawn.

In the Office Action, Claims 9-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as directed to non-statutory subject matter. In response to this rejection, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 9-17, as amended, are directed to statutory subject matter.

More particularly, Claim 9 was objected to as not being directed to a machine. The Office Action further states that “only if at least one of the claimed elements of the system is

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., original Claims 3 and 11, and p. 22, ll. 25-29 of the specification.

a physical part of a device can the system as claimed constitute part of a device or a combination of devices to be a machine within the meaning of 101.” Amended Claim 9 is directed to a system management apparatus which includes “a memory configured to store each piece of information ...” and each of the user registration means, node number assigning means, node setting means, and authority setting means store data in the memory of the device. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that the claimed memory is a physical part of the system management apparatus and the apparatus is therefore a machine within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 101.

Regarding Claim 17, this claim is amended to recite “a computer-readable recording medium including a program, which when executed by a computer, causes the computer to perform a method ...,” thus, Claim 17 is directed to functional descriptive material recorded on a computer readable medium which is executed by a computer that permits the function of the descriptive material to be realized. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 17, as amended, is also directed to statutory subject matter.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of Claims 9-17 under 35 U.S.C. § 101 be withdrawn.

Claims 1-3, 9-11 and 17-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Kobayashi. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection as independent Claims 1, 9, 17 and 19 recite novel features clearly not taught or rendered obvious by the applied reference.

Independent Claim 1, for example, is directed to a system management method for associating at least a process object and at least a process executed for each process object with each node in a tree structure, and operating each node based on the tree structure so as to manage the process object and the process. The method of Claim 1 comprises, in part;

registering, in a memory, a user ID to be uniquely assigned to each registered user that performs operations for a node;

providing a general node corresponding to the process object and *a function node that is a program for performing a process...*

setting registered user operation authority of each user ID for each of the general nodes, and storing the registered user operation authority into the memory by associating the registered user operation authority with the general node;

***setting function node operation authority for each of function nodes***, and storing the function node operation authority in the memory by associating the function node operation authority with the general node; and causing the function node to execute the process only when the process is permitted by the registered user operation authority, of the registered user requesting the process, set in the general node that is a parent node of the function node, and, when execution of the process corresponding to the function node is requested by any function nodes, causing the function node to execute the process only when the process is permitted by the function node operation authority, of the function node that requests the process, set for the general node that is the parent node of the function node.

Independent Claims 9, 17 and 19, while directed to alternative embodiments, recite similar features. Accordingly, the remarks and arguments presented below are applicable to each of independent Claims 1, 9, 17 and 19.

Turning to the applied reference, Kobayashi is directed to an access control apparatus arranged to automatically set access right information limiting data access in accordance with a user attribute when a user accesses a database.<sup>2</sup> An automatic setting unit reads out information from a login management information file and an employee information file on the basis of definition information of a definition file to automatically generate a user access right management file which stores a login ID, an item access right, and a record access right group code for each user.<sup>3</sup>

Kobayashi, however, fails to teach or suggest “providing a general node corresponding to the process object and ***a function node that is a program for performing a process***” and “***setting function node operation authority for each of function nodes***,” as recited in amended independent Claim 1.

In rejecting the claimed features directed to the configuration of the claimed “nodes,” the Office Action appears to rely on Figs. 5, 6, 15, and 16 which describe how database

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<sup>2</sup> Kobayashi, Abstract.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

entries corresponding to users of the system are classified. However, these records, which are defined by user attributes, are not the same as “***a function node that is a program for performing a process***” because the database entries corresponding to the users do not perform a function. Instead, these “nodes” merely represent information corresponding to various employees, and are not “***a program for performing a process,***” as claimed.

Further, since the “nodes” of Kobayashi do not perform a process, Kobayashi merely describes that user registration information defines whether a user is able to access employee data, which is not the same as “***setting function node operation authority for each of function nodes.***”

In rejecting the claimed “registering” feature, the Office Action appears to assert that the various files generated to control a user’s access to stored information, as depicted in Fig. 7, correspond to the claimed general node and function node as recited in Claim 1. More specifically, as depicted in Fig. 7, the user access right group automatic setting unit (M2) appears to be relied upon as the general node while the additional modules to the right appear to be relied upon as corresponding to the claimed function nodes. However, the various files generated to control access to user information in Kobayashi do not define operation ***authority for each of function nodes*** (which are programs for performing a process), but instead define access to employee information, as noted above.

Therefore, Kobayashi fails to teach or suggest a system management method which includes “providing a general node corresponding to the process object and ***a function node that is a program for performing a process***” and “***setting function node operation authority for each of function nodes,***” as recited in amended independent Claim 1.

Accordingly, for at least the reasons discussed above, Applicants respectfully that the rejection of Claim 1 (and the claims which depend therefrom) under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) be withdrawn. For substantially similar reasons, it is also submitted that independent Claim 9

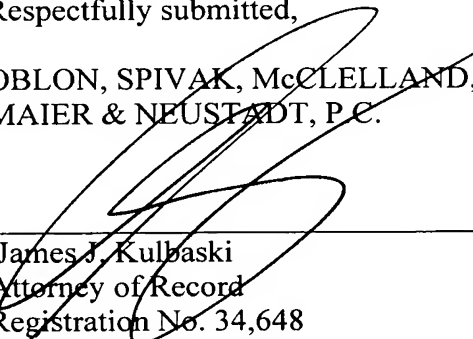
(and the claims which depend therefrom) and Claims 17 and 19 patentably define over Kobayashi.

Claims 4, 8, 12 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Kobayashi in view of Nakayama. Applicants, however, note that the Nakayama reference is, in fact, the publication of the present application. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Nakayama is not eligible as prior art against the present application, and request that the rejection of Claims 4, 8, 12 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 be withdrawn.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the foregoing comments, it is respectfully submitted that the invention defined by Claims 1-2, 4, 8-10, 12, 16-17 and 19 is patentably distinguishing over the applied references. The present application is therefore believed to be in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of the application is therefore requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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